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News Release ~ Communiqué

Government tables proposed DTH policy

OTTAWA, April 26, 1995 - Canadian Heritage Minister Michel Dupuy today tabled a proposal for a national policy on the introduction of Direct-to-Home (DTH) satellite broadcasting and DTH pay-per-view (PPV) services.

A proposed Direction to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has been tabled for 40 sitting days of review by Parliament, as set out in the Broadcasting Act. The Direction will also be published in the April 29, 1995, Canada Gazette in a call for submissions. The Direction was drafted by the Policy Review Panel on Direct-to-Home Satellite Broadcasting, and is contained in the report presented to Mr. Dupuy and Industry Minister John Manley on April 6.

This open and public process gives all interested parties the opportunity to express their views. The Government may confirm the policy as proposed or revise it prior to issuing the Direction to the CRTC.

"This important issue, which will affect the daily lives of millions of Canadians and change the shape of broadcasting, has already been thoroughly examined in the DTH report," said Mr. Dupuy. "The government agrees that we need a policy that advances our key goals of encouraging competition while protecting and promoting Canadian programming. The policy must also be fair and equitable to competing firms and technologies."

Industry Minister Manley said, "Fast action is also required, as the technology to broadcast and receive DTH services becomes more sophisticated and pervasive. The process we are initiating today will help ensure that Canada remains a world leader in communications."

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BACKGROUNDER

DTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT

On August 30, 1994, in accordance with section 9 (4) of the Broadcasting Act, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) issued an Exemption Order respecting Direct-to-Home (DTH) satellite distribution undertakings. Under this order, DTH undertakings are exempt from licensing provided that they meet certain criteria.

In a press release on September 12, 1994, the Ministers of Canadian Heritage and Industry Canada announced that while the CRTC's exemption order was consistent with existing Government policy, changes in satellite technology prompted the need for a public review of policy respecting DTH.

On November 26, 1994, a Notice was published in the Canada Gazette with a view to consulting all interested parties on issues concerning DTH satellite distribution undertakings. Subsequently, the Ministers of Canadian Heritage and Industry Canada announced the appointment of a three-member panel to review submissions received in response to the Gazette Notice and to make recommendations to Government. The Ministers stated that the DTH satellite policy review was necessary due to the imminent introduction of DTH services in Canada and their potential impact on the Canadian broadcasting and telecommunications systems.

The three-member DTH panel submitted its report and recommendations to the Ministers on April 6, 1995. The Government has reviewed the submissions and comments made by all interested parties to the DTH satellite policy review and has analyzed the recommendations contained in the panel's report.

The panel recommended that the Governor in Council propose an order issuing directions to the CRTC with respect to Direct-to-Home satellite distribution undertakings and DTH Pay-Per-View Television Programming Undertakings.

On April 26, 1995, in accordance with Sections 7 and 8 of the Broadcasting Act, a copy of each of the proposed orders was tabled in each House of Parliament. A Gazette Notice will be published on April 29 to seek public comment on the proposed orders. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) was also consulted.

Written submissions on the proposed Orders in Council are requested by June 2, 1995. Submissions should be addressed to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and filed at the Broadcasting Policy Branch, Department of Canadian Heritage, 11th Floor, 365 Laurier Ave. West, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0C8.

All submissions received in response to this notice will be made available for public viewing after June 2 at the Department of Canadian Heritage Library, 15 Eddy Street, Hull, Quebec and at the regional offices of the Department of Canadian Heritage.
